

Culinary 641

Chapter 641: Xie Baomin: I want to take my own path, leaving others with nowhere to go!

"Are you saying we should let Chef Xie go to the TV station to record a show?" Zeng Xiaoqi's face brimmed with surprise; she even forgot about the Salt Baked Chicken she had just snatched onto her plate. That's the executive chef of Fishing Platform we're talking about! Just dropping that title alone is enough to significantly boost the show's ratings.

During the initial show preparation, this had indeed been mentioned. However, back then, the thought was that getting a chef or head chef from Fishing Platform would be sufficient. The idea of getting the executive chef was utterly beyond consideration.

Recently, they had been discussing a sponsorship deal with a cookware brand. However, because Lin Ji's Food had a three-month naming rights contract, the negotiations weren't going smoothly. The representative from that brand felt that Lin Xu alone, as a chef, wasn't a strong enough draw to sustain the food show "Foodie's Wonderland" long-term. Consequently, they kept pressing to lower their offer. When Zeng Xiaoqi arrived today, the other party had even proposed a further five percent reduction, insisting on signing the contract immediately, but she had refused.

Now, with Fishing Platform's participation, the quote for the sponsor needs some reevaluation.

To put it simply:

"We need to charge more!"

If they hadn't yet formed a written partnership with Fishing Platform, Zeng "Raise the Price" Xiaoqi would be itching to message that brand representative right now and tell them to brace for a significant expenditure.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "Actually, my senior brother quite enjoys joining in on this kind of excitement. He's grown a bit tired of Fishing Platform, and this would give him a fun new venue. Plus, it offers Fishing Platform a platform to showcase itself, so they should be very supportive."

Lin Xu had initially planned to send Wei Qian and his team. But then he thought it could easily lead to viewer fatigue. Is Lin Ji's Food taking over the show or what?

So he decided to let his senior brother represent Fishing Platform for a few episodes, and then Wei Qian could go after. Having Fishing Platform's executive chef and Lin Ji's chefs take turns appearing would give viewers the illusion that Lin Ji's Food is on the same level as Fishing Platform. Whenever electronics and car brands launch new products, don't they like to take a shot at the industry leader to show off how awesome they are? Lin Ji can't outdo Fishing Platform, nor is there any way to. But they could join forces with Fishing Platform to outshine other hotels catering to foreigners and traditional famed stores. Cook and Kobe once teamed up to score a combined 83 points, so isn't it somewhat reasonable for Lin Ji and Fishing Platform to jointly become the representatives of Yanjing's Chinese cuisine?

"So when do we go to talk to Fishing Platform about this?"

Zeng Xiaoqi was somewhat impatient, fearing that if they waited even a moment longer, someone else might invite Fishing Platform to their food show. But then she remembered there were no competing food shows in Yanjing like "Foodie's Wonderland," and she relaxed somewhat.

Lin Xu popped a salt-baked cashew into his mouth. Chewing slowly, he said, "Let's go tomorrow. Tomorrow morning, I'll drive you to Fishing Platform to discuss the collaboration with Director Liao. I'll also let my senior brother know so he can prepare for his on-camera appearance."

"Great!"

Dish after dish was served.

Everyone chatted while eating. As soon as the Steam Pot Chicken was brought out, the ladies eagerly rushed to ladle soup into their bowls, unable to wait.

Usually, they were all good sisters and close friends, but when faced with a soup that was as beautifying as it was nourishing to one's qi and blood, each became a lone warrior in battle. No sisters!

Lin Xu didn't compete with them; instead, he started on the Crystal Sugar Pork Knuckle.

In a Northern banquet, chicken, fish, and pork knuckle are known as the "three main items" and are indispensable on the menu.

But today, beyond these three main items, there were also Roasted Whole Lamb and Suckling Pig, considered higher-tier banquet fare. The other dishes were also all the restaurant's signature items.

In the past, Geng Lishan would lock himself in his study and ignore everyone, but today, he joyfully introduced each dish on the table to his relatives.

As each dish was served, he earnestly recounted its history and characteristics, providing the guests with a thorough lesson in culinary history and theory.

After the main courses were served, Geng Lishan got up to make toasts.

After toasting the staff of Haidian Middle School and clinking glasses with Professor Cui, Geng Lishan approached Lin Xu with his drink.

"Young friend Lin, come, come! We two brothers must have a drink."

Brothers? The corners of Geng Lele's parents' mouths twitched. He's really had too much to drink.

Geng Lele, however, was quite happy. Holding the wine bottle, she said cheerfully, "Grandpa Lin, let me fill up your glass."

Lin Xu was momentarily speechless. The Unfortunate Matter of Me Gaining a Granddaughter Before I'm Even Married.

Although Lin Xu and Geng Lishan usually addressed each other as friends despite their age difference, Geng Lishan calling him "brother" in front of everyone today made Lin Xu instantly regretful. If I'd known, I would have left as soon as the main dishes were finished. That would have spared me this moment of awkward generational leap. Especially in front of Lele's parents, it feels like I'm taking complete advantage of the Geng Family.

He chuckled awkwardly, "Let's just say we all have our own ways of addressing each other."

He originally thought he could brush it off and move on, but Geng Lele had no intention of letting it end there.

Imitating a scene from the movie *Goodbye Mr. Loser,* she said cheerfully, "Grandpa, what are you looking for? Let me find it for you!"

Lin Xu reached out, tousled her Little Mushroom Head, and said, "I was thinking of making some lotus cakes to celebrate your successful admission to high school, but now... no lotus cakes for you."

"I was wrong, Bro..."

"Really wrong?"

"Truly, from the bottom of my heart, I was wrong."

The allure of lotus cakes was still strong; even a vivacious Little Mushroom Head would obediently admit her mistake.

Raising his glass, Lin Xu said, "Remember to keep a low profile at school and don't bully your classmates. The gifted class only accepts a few dozen students each year, and every one of them is exceptional. If you annoy them, who knows what kind of major schemes they might cook up. So, tread carefully, okay?"

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With that said, he downed the liquor in his cup.

As soon as he drank it, he regretted it.

Last time, toasting had gone smoothly because Shu Yun had switched the liquor with fizz-less Sprite, but today's cup contained genuine Erguotou, using those two-liang cups no less.

With this gulp, his head instantly buzzed.

"Refreshing!" Geng Lishan praised, unaware that his newly acknowledged sworn brother had almost not been able to handle it.

While the Geng family members went to toast others, Lin Xu quickly shoved two bites of food into his mouth to suppress the rising kick of the alcohol.

He recalled how he had been able to chat and laugh easily after drinking last time. Back then, when Shu Yun hadn't filled his cup to the brim, he'd even felt it wasn't quite exciting or satisfying enough. But today...

Real liquor is truly harmful!

"Xubao, are you going to make lotus cakes?"

While he was eating, Shen Baobao leaned in to ask. Chen Yan, Dou Wenjing, Zeng Xiaoqi, and others nearby pricked up their ears, clearly very interested.

He picked up a piece of crisp and refreshing pickle, popped it into his mouth, and said while chewing, "I was planning to, but I might not have time these next two days... I'll let you know when I do. As for teaching you, forget it. Making lotus cakes requires a certain foundation in pastry skills."

Upon hearing this, Chen Yan immediately pouted.

Hmph, if he won't teach, he won't. I'll just sneakily make them with Yueyue back at the West Fourth Ring Villa.

But then she remembered how she had confidently set out to make Milk Yellow Mooncakes last time, only to end up with milk-custard sticky rice cakes. Chef Chen instantly lost all enthusiasm for creating something with her cousin.

Having a teammate who drags you down is truly exasperating.

The ancients weren't wrong. 'When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, exposes his body to hunger, and subjects him to extreme pov—' Ugh, forget it. I'll just wait to eat the finished products made by my brother-in-law.

「After the banquet.」

The restaurant still prepared takeaway gifts for everyone.

After all, it was Geng Lele's school advancement banquet; if Lin Xu didn't put in the effort, he'd be failing in his self-perceived dual role as Geng Lele's 'grandpa' and 'big brother'.

After the guests left, Lin Xu planned to leave work early.

Erguotou, that kind of liquor, really isn't meant to be downed two liang at a time; it's seriously lethal.

「The next morning.」

Lin Xu woke up feeling clear-headed and refreshed; all the dizziness and swollen-headedness from yesterday's drinking had vanished.

This gave him the feeling of playing an old-school game.

In old-school monster-slaying games, whenever your health was low, resting at an inn would restore it, and all negative bodily effects would disappear.

Tsk, could this system really be a modded version of a game?

Arriving at the restaurant, this morning's meal was fish slice porridge, accompanied by small fried dough sticks and pancakes with vegetable filling.

Lin Xu took a freshly griddled pancake, spread some special fermented bean paste on it, added a few slices of crisp, tender lettuce, and finally placed a golden-brown pan-fried sausage on top. He rolled it up and took a bite.

Mmm, that hits the spot!

He hadn't eaten much the previous night after drinking that cup of Erguotou.

This resulted in him waking up with an empty stomach. Now, taking a bite of the thin, oily pancake filled with crisp, tender lettuce felt just incredible.

After finishing one, the fish slice porridge was almost ready.

This type of porridge is quite simple to make. First, start cooking the congee. While it's cooking, slice the fish and marinate it for a while.

When the congee is ready, add the fish slices, stir, then turn off the heat. Let it sit covered for a minute, allowing the fish's savory flavor to fully infuse into the rice porridge. This makes the fish slice porridge unforgettably delicious.

Of course, while cooking the congee, one should also add a spoonful of lard to the pot.

Congee made this way is not only fragrant but also has a distinctly different texture.

Lin Xu had eaten his fill. He rolled up another pancake, put it in a lunchbox, and took it to the residential complex out back to wake up Shen Baobao, who was still drooling in her sleep, for breakfast.

「At nine in the morning.」

He drove his X5 to the TV station, picked up Zeng Xiaoqi, who was dressed in black sportswear and wearing a baseball cap, and then drove straight to Fishing Platform.

The 'Taste of the Human World' program was now entirely under Director Zeng's full responsibility.

So this time, Zhen Wensheng didn't need to go. With the entire channel up and running smoothly, Director Zhen had also started to put on the airs of a top-level director.

"Can we score a free meal there at noon?"

Zeng Xiaoqi felt she had been led astray by Dou Wenjing, Chen Yan, and Shu Yun.

She used to be intellectual and refined. Although she liked fine food, she always ate in moderation and never overindulged.

Ever since she met those bad-influence girlfriends, the once intellectual and refined female host had turned into a glutton, constantly thinking about food. It was quite disheartening.

She also wanted to change, to become a fresh and composed beauty again.

But each time, her resolve to diet was mercilessly eroded by delicious food.

Just like some netizens who, come Thursday, can't hold back their urge to feast.

Sigh... The road to slimming down is so arduous!

Upon arriving at Fishing Platform, Lin Xu didn't go looking for his senior brother but drove directly to Director Liao's office.

After getting out of the car, just as he entered, he saw Bai Pengbo brewing tea.

"Ah, Lin Xu, you're here! Director Liao is inside waiting for you. He places great importance on this collaboration and even plans to gather all the head chefs for a brief meeting later."

Lin Xu handed over a snack bag from Lin Ji's Food, saying, "These are some fish slices I baked in my spare time. I'd appreciate your feedback, Assistant Bai."

"Oh, thank you, thank you! Who am I to give you pointers? Netizens say that the items from Lin Ji's Food that aren't sold externally are all legendary delicacies. I'll have to savor these later."

After chatting for a bit with Bai Pengbo, Lin Xu and Zeng Xiaoqi walked into Director Liao's office together.

Liao Jinming was sitting in his office chair, a cup of Luo Han Guo tea on his desk. Seeing Lin Xu come in, he quickly stood up and said, "Welcome, welcome! Mr. Lin, your presence truly graces my humble office."

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Lin Xu chuckled and exchanged pleasantries with him before moving on to serious matters.

Zeng Xiaoqi said, "If the chefs from Fishing Platform are willing to participate in filming the show, the show will display the Fishing Platform banner multiple times and give special thanks to Fishing Platform for its strong support at the end of the episode."

As long as you can join, everything else will be easy to discuss. After all, Fishing Platform has a big reputation; just a slight brush with it could bump the viewership up a notch.

Liao Jinming wasn't particularly concerned about this. His only goal was to fulfill the task assigned by the leadership: to attract as many potential customers as possible and increase the revenue of the various buildings.

On this basis, having the head chefs record a cooking show was a piece of cake. This also provided a platform for that group of chefs, brimming with unspent energy, to showcase themselves.

Last time, word was that head chefs from other hotels catering to foreigners were keen on ganging up on Fishing Platform. However, they were subdued by Lin Xu's Qingshui Furong, and no one dared to take the lead afterward. This had frustrated the chefs at Fishing Platform for quite some time.

Such a great opportunity. And it was wasted by a few scaredy-cats. If the younger generation couldn't overpower Fishing Platform, wouldn't the middle-aged generation need to redouble their efforts for revenge?

However, the head chefs from those hotels didn't make a peep, causing Fishing Platform to miss out on a grand chance to show off.

But now a new opportunity had knocked on their door.

Liao Jinming could finally have some peace.

After the discussion, Liao Jinming, on behalf of the Dining Department at Fishing Platform, and Zeng Xiaoqi, the person in charge of the program "Flavors of the Human World," signed a cooperation agreement.

Once signed, the matter was considered settled.

Not only did Zeng Xiaoqi want to freeload a meal here, but Lin Xu also felt that since he had come, it would be somewhat rude not to have a meal before leaving.

To make it until the lunch hour, the two of them once again put on the act of being concerned about the show and attended a seminar organized by the Dining Department.

The subject of the meeting was simple: it was about the head chefs taking the time to go to the TV station for filming. Before going, they needed to communicate well with the TV station about the content to be recorded. They also had to inform them about the cooking time for each dish so the TV station could better manage filming schedules.

Then they began to decide who would go on the show.

Guo Weidong, the head chef of Building No. 10, was certainly not going. Building No. 10 had the best business and needed its head chef on site.

Besides chefs from buildings with high business volume, those with reception duties or involved in exchange programs also couldn't participate.

Consequently, nearly half of the head chefs lost the smiles on their faces. They wouldn't get to show off their cooking skills in front of the TV audience.

Liao Jinming said, "Going to the TV station isn't for fun; you must demonstrate the professionalism and high-end quality of the Fishing Platform's catering department. Zhenhua, you know how to make dough fruits, don't you? Show it off when the time comes so the audience can see what high-end Chinese-style dough fruits look like. It'll stop people from always going on about 'Dragon's Roar' this and 'Dragon's Roar' that. In my opinion, aren't those just made with gelatin, food coloring, and molds? What's so special about them?"

Dough fruits? The kind made to look like fruit using dough? Looks like they're preparing a big move!

Sitting in the conference room, Lin Xu and Zeng Xiaoqi felt like they were attending a mobilization meeting before a battle for an independent regiment. Director Liao, usually mild-mannered and seemingly a nice guy, suddenly seemed possessed by the spirit of Li Longyun. He fiercely assigned... oh, not tasks for storming a position, but rather the filming tasks.

Qiu Zhenhua adjusted the gold-rimmed glasses perched on his nose. "All right, Director Liao, since you've spoken, when I go to film, I won't hold back."

Liao Jinming nodded, then turned to look at Song Dahai. "We have quite a few high-end seafood dishes, too; don't forget to showcase them. Prepare a few of Fishing Platform's high-end dishes to be as elaborate as possible."

After going through the list, when it was Xie Baomin's turn, Liao Jinming took a sip of the Luo Han Guo tea from his cup, his voice becoming more earnest. "Baomin, take it easy, will you? Don't keep making dishes that your master has a non-disclosure agreement for. Some dishes really aren't suitable for showing off; don't make it hard for me and your master."

Xie Baomin cracked a smile, "Director Liao, you are being biased."

Liao Jinming glanced at him, "This afternoon was originally set for you to record the first episode. Do you want to switch with Weidong instead?"

"No need, no need, Dongdong is too busy over there. It's better for me. I'll take it easy and won't mess around."

After the meeting, Lin Xu drove Zeng Xiaoqi and Xie Baomin back to Building No. 2.

In the car, Xie Baomin was still brooding over Liao Jinming's arrangement. "Why did our master bother creating so many original dishes if we can't show them off? Isn't that like parading in brocade at night?"

Lin Xu controlled the car's speed as he spoke, "Just do whatever Director Liao says. We'll get familiar with the audience first... What's for lunch at Building No. 2 today?"

First, ask about the food. If it's good, head to Building No. 2; if not, find another building to turn into. After all, with eighteen buildings, surely not all of them have bad food.

Xie Baomin wasn't concerned about that; he looked out the window listlessly and said, "This morning, Old Cheng got a few 'three-stripe scales,' which are Northeastern Carp. He's planning on making Demoli Stewed Fish and Earth Three Fresh. It's autumn, so it's the season for Earth Three Fresh."

Not bad.

Lin Xu hadn't tried Demoli Stewed Fish before, but he knew about Earth Three Fresh. Despite being a vegetarian dish, its ability to complement rice far surpassed that of many meat dishes.

So, they decided to go to Building No. 2, to experience the difference between the Earth Three Fresh made at Fishing Platform and that from a school cafeteria.

When they arrived at Building No. 2, Lin Xu parked the car. By then it was already eleven o'clock.

As they walked into the building together, Zeng Xiaoqi asked, "Executive Chef Xie, you're starting to record the show this afternoon. Which dish are you planning to make? I want to mentally prepare myself."

This was Zeng Xiaoqi's first collaboration with a State Banquet head chef, which made the beautiful Ms. Zeng somewhat nervous.

The dejection previously shown on Xie Baomin's face had disappeared. He spoke with a gleam in his eyes, "Since Director Liao wants a high-end dish, I'll make the new Chinese-style dough fruits I recently learned. They'll definitely be indistinguishable from the real thing, and the flavor is also fantastic."

Wait a minute... Weren't those dough fruits what Director Liao told Chef Qiu to make?

Lin Xu curiously asked, "Senior Brother, if you make the dish that Chef Qiu was supposed to prepare, what will Chef Qiu make?"

Xie Baomin laughed heartily, "The TV station is so far away; it's not easy for Qiuqiu to make the trip. I might as well do it for him to save him the hassle of going back and forth... There are other head chefs, too. I've also helped prepare their signature dishes. Old Xie here is just that selfless and altruistic!"

Lin Xu: "..."

With your "take others' paths and leave them no path" philosophy, it's no wonder you could end up in a sack someday. I really hope that day comes sooner rather than later...

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"Chef Xie, what ingredients are needed for the dough fruit? I'll have the program team prepare them."

As the host of a travel show, Zeng Xiaoqi had seen dough fruit a few times at friends' weddings, generally in the form of cartoon-shaped persimmons and peanuts, symbolizing "good things happening."

So when she saw Liao Jinming earnestly assigning the task of preparing the dough fruit to Qiu Zhenhua during the meeting, she felt somewhat disappointed.

If it was the kind of dough fruit symbolizing "good things happening," it really wouldn't be easy to wow the audience.

Many people had encountered those at banquets; they weren't anything rare.

But now, seeing Xie Baomin so eager to make it, his face beaming with the pride and excitement of having snatched the opportunity from Chef Qiu, she had a faint feeling that the dough fruit Liao Jinming mentioned might be different from what she had tried before.

After all, even Chef Xie was so enthusiastic; perhaps it really could boost the ratings.

With this expectation, she, the program director, also became serious.

She began to inquire about the needed ingredients, to prevent Xie Baomin from having to rush around sourcing ingredients in a panic, which could affect the shooting schedule.

Xie Baomin said, "No need to prepare. Our chefs from Fishing Platform generally bring their own ingredients when cooking outside, and sometimes even their kitchen tools, just because they're worried about not being accustomed to another kitchen's environment."

The more high-end the chef, the higher the demands for ingredients.

Imagine asking someone to make a delicate cabbage dish, and then handing them a wilted head of cabbage to work with; it would certainly put the chef in an awkward position.

So, the chefs from Fishing Platform usually bring their own ingredients when they go out.

They are already completely familiar with high-quality ingredients. They know the texture of the meats and the quality of the vegetables inside out, and abruptly switching to lower-quality ingredients wouldn't allow them to fully showcase their culinary skills. Similar principles applied to kitchen tools; for instance, when Xie Baomin went to Lin Ji's Food to help out, he even brought his own kitchen knife.

This wasn't just because he worried the knives there might not feel right in his hand, but mainly because, after using someone else's knife, it would take him a long time to regain the smooth and effortless sensation he felt with his own.

And the weight and thickness of a knife can affect how it feels in your hand.

Apart from the ingredients and kitchen knives, the cookware is also important.

The chefs' favorite is that kind of thin, well-seasoned iron wok. It heats quickly and, when well-seasoned, is non-stick. It's also easier to gauge the strength needed when tossing food in the wok.

If you switch to a coated nonstick pan or one of those heavy, clumsy stainless steel pots, it takes a lot of time to adapt to the kitchenware.

As Xie Baomin entered the main door of the No. 2 Building restaurant, he said to Gu Junli, "This is Director Zeng from Yanjing TV Station; my junior apprentice brother and I came here to discuss something and also to have lunch... Bring the food over when it's ready; we still have to go to film the show after eating."

If Lin Xu had come by himself, he would have just gone straight to the kitchen in the back.

But with Zeng Xiaoqi around, it seemed somewhat inappropriate to go to the kitchen.

"Authorized personnel only" is the rule of all kitchens, including Lin Ji, where Shen Baobao and Chen Yan, who were currently learning to cook, were confined to the small kitchen beside the duck roasting oven.

The main kitchen is off-limits.

Upon hearing this, Gu Junli quickly headed to the kitchen, saying, "I'll go check if Chef Cheng is done; he's cooking today."

As she headed to the kitchen, the other waiters brought over a teapot and some snacks, placing them on a seat by the window.

No instructions necessary; everything was handled smoothly and thoughtfully.

Lin Xu didn't hesitate. As he and Zeng Xiaoqi settled down, he took a sip of tea and also tried a very delicately made egg yolk cookie, which had a strong egg aroma and a crumbly, buttery texture.

"Wow, these cookies are good."

Zeng Xiaoqi had intended to try just one, considering these little cookies were all tiny calorie bombs, definitely leading to weight gain if overeaten.

But once she started, she couldn't stop.

Soon, Gu Junli and two waiters came over carrying dishes.

From afar, the aromatic scent of stewed fish blended with the rich fragrance of Northeastern Big Sauce and the savory aroma of stewed tofu wafted over, a comforting and soul-soothing aroma.

After it was placed down, Lin Xu saw a tray with a stewed fish, its skin a reddish hue, with tofu uniformly arranged on one side of the Fish Belly, and a large clump of stewed vermicelli on the other side.

The tofu and vermicelli, rosy in color, looked very appetizing.

Is this the famous Demori stewed fish?

The other dish was a delicious treat often eaten during university days, Earth Three Fresh.

Eggplants were cut into chunks and deep-fried. Potatoes were sliced thickly and similarly fried. After stir-frying the aromatics until fragrant, the ingredients were added back into the pan. Then, a pre-mixed sauce was added, and the dish was finished by reducing the sauce over high heat.

Simple to make, but goes great with rice.

"Come on, let's eat. After we finish, we'll head to the TV station to shoot the dough fruit segment, so you can also prepare the trailer."

Xie Baomin was very keen on this.

After all, life at Fishing Platform was dreadfully dull and monotonous, and now he had the chance to appear on TV to cook. Who wouldn't be excited about that?

Lin Xu picked up his rice, first trying a piece of the Earth Three Fresh eggplant.

The eggplant was fried thoroughly, soft and fragrant upon entering the mouth, filled with savory, delicious sauce, making one instinctively want to shovel down a few more mouthfuls of rice.

This was a marvelous dish, purely vegetarian, containing no meat, and made with the most common vegetables.

Yet fried and cooked together, it developed a flavor and texture that many were obsessed with; many a potbelly had its origins in this very dish.

Yeah, it's a vegetarian dish, no fatty pork belly in sight. You unconsciously let your guard down and end up eating a few more bites, unintentionally dishing out a bit more rice for yourself.

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I always felt that there was nothing wrong with eating like this, but my little belly unwittingly started to grow.

Lin Xu shoveled a mouthful of rice, then picked up a piece of Demoli braised fish with his chopsticks, listening to his Senior Brother explain the origin of Demoli braised fish as he ate.

"Demoli is a place name, located on the banks of the Northeast Songhua River. The villagers there rely on fishing for a living. The braised fish made by this village is very delicious, so everyone named the dish after the place, Demoli."

The exact name of this dish should be Demoli Braised Live Fish, and the best way to prepare it is to stew the fish right after it has been caught.

As for which fish to stew, there aren't any strictly defined requirements; common Carp, Grass Carp, more expensive sea fish, or even river groupers can all be used.

However, to make the dish tastier, it is better to choose a fattier fish.

Doing so results in a richer broth and a more intense aroma, making the dish more delicious and a great complement to rice.

The three-scaled, smooth-skinned carp chosen by Building Two today was a good choice; its flesh was rich and oily, making the tofu and vermicelli stewed with it especially tasty.

Lin Xu took a mouthful of vermicelli into his bowl and ate it. The rich, savory taste and smooth texture reminded him of eating chicken stewed with mushrooms.

When he had chicken stewed with mushrooms before, the vermicelli had also been saturated with soup and was just as delicious with rice.

"I just can't handle Northeastern cuisine; I always overeat. If I keep this up, my stomach will be ruined sooner or later."

Zeng Xiaoqi muttered indignantly while frantically shoveling rice into her mouth. There was no helping it; it was just too delicious.

Both dishes were typical accompaniments for rice, and the rice from Building Two was famously delicious. Under such circumstances, who could resist?

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After the meal, Lin Xu and Zeng Xiaoqi sat outside drinking tea, while Xie Baomin returned to the kitchen to pack up the ingredients, filling several bulging bags.

"What's all this stuff, Senior Brother?" Lin Xu asked, looking puzzled at the bags, which seemed to be filled with fruits like apples and pears.

We're filming a food show, not visiting a nursing home. Why bring so many fruits? And aren't you supposed to make pastries? Are you planning on using these real fruits as a backup?

Xie Baomin laughed and explained, "These fruits are for making fillings. After peeling and coring the apples, we turn them into a puree, then add some pear, and slowly cook it in a pot. As the moisture cooks out, the volume will shrink by more than half. It takes almost three apples and one pear to make enough filling for a single pastry."

It sounds quite wasteful. They might as well just eat fresh fruits. It's like those experts on the internet who calculated the calories in a mooncake, saying one mooncake has the same calories as five fried chicken legs, and advised everyone to eat fewer mooncakes. That's hilarious. I'd rather just eat fried chicken legs. Who needs mooncakes anyway?

Once all the necessary ingredients were loaded into the vehicle, Xie Baomin, driving his Cayenne, followed Lin Xu's X5 out of Fishing Platform and headed towards Yanjing City Television Station.

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Upon arriving at the station, the crew was already in place, and even Geng Lishan had rushed over from home.

Chinese pastries, handmade by the head chef of Fishing Platform—this was truly something to look forward to.

Having moved all the needed ingredients to the filming site, Lin Xu suddenly felt it was quite a hassle. He looked at Zeng Xiaoqi and suggested, "Should we just set up an ingredient supplier? Let them deliver whatever we need; otherwise, it's really tiring to move stuff like this."

Once he said this, Zeng Xiaoqi also felt that having the chefs bring their own ingredients each time was quite troublesome.

If the head chefs were concerned about ingredient quality, then finding a high-end supplier would solve the issue, ensuring the quality of the dishes and saving the chefs from lugging ingredients back and forth.

"Do you have someone in mind?"

Of course, he had someone in mind. Old Huang had long been waiting to partner with the food show, hoping to tap into Beijing's high-end food ingredient purchasing market.

Seizing this opportunity, Lin Xu made a phone call to Old Huang, asking him to find some time to come to the TV station and discuss the cooperation.

After receiving so many high-quality medicinal ingredients from him, I finally have a chance to return the favor.

After handling these matters, Xie Baomin had also set out all the ingredients needed: Medium Flour, Wheat Flour, Baking Powder, Yeast, Cheese Powder, white sugar, lard, cocoa powder, red beet, Potato Flour, as well as a lot of apples and pears.

Originally, Lin Xu had not planned to take part in the recording. He just wanted to wait until the pastries were done to bring a couple back for his Shen Baobao.

But after Xie Baomin put on his chef's uniform, he said, "Junior Brother, making these pastries is a lot of work. Help me out with the recording later, okay?"

"Well... all right then."

Lin Xu wasn't hesitant and immediately headed to the adjacent dressing room to change into his own chef's uniform.

After he changed, Zeng Xiaoqi, who had finished her makeup, came over.

Filming started. Following a brief opening, Lin Xu introduced his Senior Brother, Xie Baomin.

Next, Xie Baomin briefly spoke about the development of pastries, and then they moved into the preparation segment.

Delicious pastries depend on good fruit filling.

Xie Baomin skillfully peeled apples with a kitchen knife while saying, "For high-end Chinese pastries, the principle is 'what fruit, what filling.' Today we're making apple pastries, so we'll use an apple filling. If we were making date pastries, we'd use date paste for the filling."

The so-called pastries are essentially fruit shapes made of dough.

In traditional Chinese cooking, pastries have always been a favorite snack of nobles and high officials.

These pastries are not only judged on their realistic appearance but must also taste identical to the real fruit.

Lin Xu also started peeling with a knife, curiously asking, "Didn't you say to use the same filling as the fruit? What are the pears for, Senior Brother?"

Chapter 646: Making Chinese Pastry! Senior brother, is this what you called not being skilled in pastry?
_3

"It's to neutralize the tartness of the apples. Pure apples become sour when heated, which affects the initial taste when eaten. Adding a few pears will counteract that sourness with their sweet freshness, resulting in a filling that's more pleasantly tart and slightly sweet."

Seeing his Junior Brother's curiosity, Xie Baomin added, "Too many pears will overpower the apple flavor. Generally, one pear for every three or four apples is enough. The pear cores must be thoroughly removed; otherwise, the sourness will be even stronger."

My Senior Brother is so knowledgeable, Lin Xu thought. He vaguely remembered his Senior Brother mentioning that he wasn't an expert in pastry. But listening to him describe it in such detail, he seems nothing short of a pastry expert!

After coring, the apples were roughly chopped, then put into a food processor and blended into a thick paste. This was then poured into a pan. Once all the fruit was blended, Xie Baomin turned on medium heat to cook it down.

Soon, as the temperature rose, the fruit paste in the pot began to bubble vigorously—BLUB, BLUB, BLUB—and steam, its moisture rapidly evaporating.

The aroma of apples and pears was very comforting. Geng Lishan, who was sitting nearby, softly said to Zhen Wensheng, "No seasonings in the pot; this is true Kung Fu."

The less one used sweeteners and thickeners like Honey, white sugar, or Maltose, the more it tested the chef's skill. This was because one not only had to reduce the moisture in the filling little by little but also ensure there were no flaws during the process. Otherwise, if anything got scorched, the entire batch of filling would be ruined.

However, Xie Baomin's culinary skills were unquestionable. He was confident when it came to stir-frying ingredients and certainly wouldn't let the filling burn.

As the moisture was almost cooked off, he added some Potato Flour to the mixture. This Potato Flour was neither potato noodles nor potato starch, but a powder made by directly grinding dried potatoes, presenting a light coffee color. It was an essential ingredient in many snacks.

After adding the Potato Flour into the pot and stirring a few more times, the moisture in the filling was completely absorbed by the Potato Flour, turning stickier and resembling dough. At this point, it couldn't be fried any longer, or it would easily burn at the bottom.

Xie Baomin transferred the filling from the pot, spread it out on a tray, and let the temperature drop as much as possible.

During this time, Xie Baomin began making the Dough.

He poured Medium Flour into a basin, added Cheese Powder, which would give the apples a slight yellowish color, then added Baking Powder for fluffiness, and finally, lard. After adding these ingredients, he fetched a large bowl of warm water, dissolved white sugar and Yeast Powder in it, and stirred until they blended.

Then he began to knead the Dough.

Lin Xu, standing next to the cooling filling, saw that everyone's attention was on his Senior Brother, so he sneakily scraped a bit of the cooked filling with a spoon and tasted it.

There was an immediate strong flavor of apple, followed by subtle tartness and sweetness. The taste was not overpowering but rather comforting. Possibly due to the addition of Potato Flour, the filling had a soft and sticky texture, complemented by a clean and sweet flavor, which was simply delicious.

Lin Xu really wanted to persuade his Senior Brother to stop there. Let's just divide this filling and eat it like this, he thought. Eating a bowl of this with a spoon would definitely be incredibly satisfying.

"Junior Brother, is it still too hot to handle?" Xie Baomin asked. "If not, go ahead and roll it into small balls, 20 grams each. It's best to use a scale to weigh them so they don't vary too much in size."

"Don't worry, Senior Brother, they will be absolutely consistent," Lin Xu replied.

If it were any other step, Lin Xu might not have been able to manage it. But with his hands as his scale, this step was quite easy for him. He simply grabbed a bit of the filling, rolled it in his palms, and each ball turned out perfectly round, as if it had been weighed on an electronic scale.

After molding the filling into balls, he placed them on a tray and then put them into the refrigerator to cool. When wrapping them, the temperature of the filling must not be too high; otherwise, the heat radiating from the inside would cause the pastry around it to expand from within and ultimately burst open.

After placing the filling in the refrigerator, Xie Baomin had also finished kneading the Dough.

Zeng Xiaoqi had been interacting with Xie Baomin, asking him about the benefits of adding lard, the time needed for fermentation, and so on.

Xie Baomin said with a smile, "Using lard in the Dough makes it white, shiny, and fragrant. When making leavened snacks, lard is a very common additive."

The Dough needed to rest for fifteen minutes. During this time, everyone took a short break.

Geng Lishan came over, glanced at the Dough in the basin, and said, "As expected of the head chef at Fishing Platform, every step is very particular. I'm getting more and more excited about the dough snacks you'll make, and I hope our friend Lin Xu can learn too. These kinds of dough snacks are an essential bonus for high-end restaurants."

Really? Lin Xu had originally approached the show's recording as a chance to watch the fun and get a free meal. But since Geng Lishan had said so, he decided he was ready to learn. After all, he still had a Perfect Level Cooking Learning Card. When it's made later, I'll just study it, and I'll have mastered the Technique for these dough snacks! he thought. Introducing them at my store would definitely cause a sensation among customers. Who could resist such cute dough snacks that look like little apples?

Zeng Xiaoqi walked over to Lin Xu and whispered, "I saw you secretly eating the apple filling just now. Was it good?"

"Superb!" Lin Xu replied.

"Had I known, I would've eaten less rice at noon," Zeng Xiaoqi lamented. "Now, even if I want to, I probably can't fit it in. It's so frustrating..."

After a short break, they resumed recording.

Xie Baomin removed the plastic wrap covering the mixing bowl and poured the prepared Wheat Flour into it, carefully kneading it into the Dough. This step was relatively difficult because Wheat Flour was quite dry. Kneading it into the already fermented Dough could make the Dough harden and dry out.

However, it was critical not to add water at this stage. One just had to continue kneading vigorously. With a little more kneading, the Wheat Flour would be fully incorporated, and the Dough would become soft again.

"Mr. Lishan, what's the purpose of adding Wheat Flour to the mix?" Zhen Wensheng asked, curious. It seemed unnecessary to him to go to the trouble of kneading Wheat Flour into already perfectly risen Dough; it felt like an extra, redundant step.

Geng Lishan explained with a smile, "Wheat Flour is good for shaping and can also reduce the gluten in the Dough, allowing it to expand more fully. It gives more control when shaping it later."

After completely kneading the Wheat Flour into the Dough, Xie Baomin placed it on the board. He first pressed it flat, folded it, and then continued pressing. Finally, he held the Dough with his left hand while the heel of his right hand vigorously rubbed it forward. He spread the Dough out completely and then kneaded it back together. The purpose of this was to make the Dough smoother and shinier.

"The more thoroughly the Dough is kneaded, the shinier it will be when steamed," Xie Baomin explained. "If the kneading is subpar, specks will appear on the Dough's surface when steamed, ruining its appearance."

Once the Dough was well-kneaded, he rolled it into a long strip and then divided it into 20-gram pieces. The divided pieces of Dough had to be immediately covered with plastic wrap to prevent the surface from drying out and cracking.

Lin Xu, seeing this, started to help as well. He rolled the portions of Dough Xie Baomin had divided into small balls.

Then he retrieved the chilled filling from the refrigerator and began the Filling process. First, he flattened a piece of Dough into a disk and then placed the filling inside. Using the area between his thumb and forefinger, he slowly gathered the edges of the Dough, firmly wrapping it around the filling.

After all the pieces were filled, Xie Baomin directly began to shape them into apples. He took a filled dough ball, rolled it a few times, then shaped it so one end was larger than the other. He then pressed an indent with his little finger into the larger end. Lastly, he used the pointed end of a rolling pin to press a small, deeper indent. This marked the position of the apple's stem and needed to be pressed in a bit harder; otherwise, it would puff up during steaming and lose its apple-like appearance.

Lin Xu watched, somewhat in a daze, a question forming in his mind: Is this what Senior Brother meant by not being good with pastry?

「Meanwhile, in Building 6 of Fishing Platform」

Qiu Zhenhua was busily preparing the ingredients for the dough snacks. "Director Liao wants me to showcase high-end cooking techniques," he muttered to himself, "so I'll start with the dough snacks shaped like apples. This method is relatively simple but stunning enough to look great on the show."

The sous-chef helping him asked curiously, "Besides apples, what else are you planning to make? What if someone makes them before you? Don't you need a Plan B?"

"Aside from me, who else could make app—"

Suddenly, the smile on Qiu Zhenhua's face froze. Wait a minute. I remember last week when I was making dough snacks here, Xie Baomin suddenly came by for a visit. That bastard watched from

beginning to end... "No," he exclaimed, "I have to make a trip to the TV station to see what exactly Old Xie is cooking up today!"

Chapter 647: Holy moly, it looks even more like an apple than a real apple! Qiuqiu, I have a sincere suggestion for you!

The TV studio's recording room was busy as the program's filming continued.

Xie Baomin was shaping small dough apples. Seeing that Lin Xu had finished wrapping the apple filling, he said, "Junior Brother, go cut a few carrot sections and stick a short chopstick in the middle of each. Once the apples are shaped, they can't be placed back on the work surface; they need to be lifted with the chopsticks. This way, when they're steamed, the apples will puff up rounder and more beautifully."

It could be done like this? Lin Xu felt he had learned a new trick. He hadn't expected Carrots could be used this way, nor had he thought steaming round Snacks could be so simple. In the future, when steaming similar items, I can use this simple method with Carrots and chopsticks. However, if I were to make these frequently in the shop, it would be better to buy a specially made steaming basket.

Lin Xu had seen such specially made steaming baskets before. They had non-slip stainless steel rods welded on top, designed to hold Snacks in place for steaming, and could even be used for buns. The once-famous high-pile buns from the Central Plains were steamed this way.

Lin Xu took a few Carrots and sliced them into sections about five centimeters thick. This thickness ensured the chopsticks could be inserted firmly and provided enough weight to prevent the dough apples from tilting or overturning during steaming. After slicing the Carrots, he took a bundle of bamboo disposable chopsticks and cut them, keeping a piece about ten centimeters long from the thicker head end of each. Then, he whittled the cut ends slightly to form points and stuck one into each carrot section, leaving the top of the chopstick (the thicker, unused end) exposed.

When making this kind of temporary support, the intact head of the chopstick must face upwards. This effectively prevents any splinters from the cut end from getting into the dough apples, which could injure the mouth. Of course, it's still best to use a professional steaming rack. Otherwise, steaming just once would waste several Carrots and a bundle of disposable chopsticks, which is far too wasteful.

As soon as Lin Xu finished preparing the supports, Xie Baomin inserted a white dough apple onto one of the chopsticks, stem-end up. The apple was shaped so lifelike; even the wrinkles at the calyx were crafted. This was a true test of pastry skills because not only did the wrinkles need to look right, but it

was also crucial for the dough apple to retain similar markings after being steamed. Otherwise, the finished product might look correct in form but lack spirit, affecting its final presentation.

"How did you do that part, Senior Brother?" Lin Xu asked.

"You press it out with the tip of a bamboo skewer. An apple generally has five ridges, so just press down five times," Xie Baomin explained, demonstrating the technique as he worked. After shaping the stem area on the larger end of the dough apple, he turned it over, so the smaller end (where the calyx would be) faced up. First, he used the pointed end of a small rolling pin to make a fairly deep, straight indentation. Then, he picked up a bamboo skewer, the kind used for grilled sausages, and laid it flat, perpendicular to the indentation made by the rolling pin. Using the tip of the skewer, he pressed down along the straight indentation, pushing down the surrounding dough as well. He then rotated it slightly, by a few tens of degrees, and pressed again. Repeating this five times in a circle formed the angled ridges of the apple's calyx.

He cradled the dough apple in his hand, pinching it a few more times to refine the apple shape. The indentations at the top (stem) and bottom (calyx) needed to be distinct, and the "waist" of the apple, its middle section, should be squeezed slightly narrower. This way, when it expanded during steaming, the apple's shape would be perfectly rendered. The difficulty in shaping leavened Snacks wasn't in the pinching itself, but in accurately predicting the final appearance after steaming and rising. Only those who could do this could be called masters. After carefully shaping it, Xie Baomin reinserted the dough apple onto the chopstick.

The whole process appeared simple and efficient, giving the impression of being "nothing special," but Lin Xu knew very well that every step was far from simple and highly dependent on experience. If I tried it rashly, I'd definitely mess it up. If this were just practice on my own, messing up wouldn't be a big deal. But we're recording a show right now! If that mischievous young editor later decided to include any blunders in the final cut, it would be a huge joke.

"Boss Lin, aren't you going to try making one?" Zeng Xiaoqi asked curiously, seeing Lin Xu standing off to the side with his hands behind his back, acting as a spectator. Wouldn't it save time if two people were doing it? Why isn't Boss Lin helping out?

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "My Senior Brother is the head chef today; I'm just assisting."

Hearing his Junior Brother's comment, Xie Baomin didn't stand on ceremony. He passed a piece of dough he had set aside earlier to Lin Xu. "Isn't there cocoa powder over there? Knead it into this dough to make it a deep coffee color."

Oh? What's this step for? Lin Xu took the piece of dough and kneaded it a few times. After resting just now, the dough has puffed up a bit more. With sugar added, the Yeast is really active!

Just as he was about to ask, Xie Baomin proactively explained, "Just having the apples isn't complete; they need stems too. And the calyx area also needs a little something stuffed in, so it looks dark, more like a real apple."

Tsk tsk, Senior Brother is really going all out this time! He even thought of the stems and calyx. The apples made this way will be completely indistinguishable from real ones, right?

He took the piece of dough, pinched some cocoa powder onto it, and began kneading them together. Because the cocoa powder was a bit dry, it wasn't easy to knead into the dough. It had to be added gradually, bit by bit, until the dough turned a coffee color. This type of cocoa powder, sometimes called chocolate powder, is a Western ingredient but sees wide application in Chinese cuisine. For example, in common flower rolls, unless specified otherwise, cocoa powder is used instead of traditional sorghum flour. The reason is that cocoa powder produces a more attractive color; just a small amount mixed into the dough achieves perfect coloration, whereas much more sorghum flour would be needed for the same effect.

Chapter 648: Wow, it looks even more like an apple than a real apple! Qiuqiu, I have a sincere suggestion for you!_2

Additionally, sorghum flour was coarse, children disliked it, and it was also expensive.

Although cocoa powder was also pricey, only a small amount was needed, its texture was fine, and children liked it.

Nowadays, families really do revolve entirely around their children... Lin Xu sighed to himself, suddenly thinking that his own Shen Baobao was also like a child.

I should steam some flower rolls for her when I have time.

If other families have them, our good Baobao should have them too.

Sitting at her office desk, browsing autumn couple outfits, Shen Baobao was unaware that her Xu Bao was secretly planning to make her some delicious food.

After adding cocoa powder three times, Lin Xu finally achieved the effect that his senior brother wanted.

Xie Baomin finished shaping all the dough fruits, brought over the steaming basket, placed each dough fruit in it, then covered the basket with a layer of plastic wrap and let it rest for ten minutes before steaming.

Whether making steamed buns or other filled buns, you should not steam them immediately after shaping.

Allowing them to rest first will result in more thorough and fluffier dough expansion.

Taking advantage of this time, Xie Baomin started making the apple stems.

He took a bit of coffee-colored dough, placed it on the pastry board, and rubbed it with his thumb to form a long strip, larger at one end and smaller at the other, about two to three centimeters long.

"Wow, this is even thinner than a toothpick."

Lin Xu marveled. He recalled his senior brother always saying he wasn't proficient in pastry. At the time, Lin Xu had assumed it meant he was completely inept. Now it seems this so-called lack of proficiency is relative to his skill in savory cooking, isn't it?

The two TV station camera operators came over, holding their cameras with telephoto lenses to film.

The stems were made so finely that the usual video cameras at the station couldn't capture them clearly; comparatively, cameras with telephoto lenses produced a clearer image.

After preparing enough stems for the dough fruits, they set up the steaming pot and started boiling water.

Once the water was boiling, they didn't rush to add the dough fruits. Instead, they placed the finely molded stems on Baking Paper, then on the steamer tray, and began to steam them.

Steaming the stems in advance allowed them to dry slightly on the outside, making the surface harder, which facilitated easier insertion into the dough fruits.

And drying them until they were slightly hardened also made them resemble real stems more closely.

The steaming process for the stems was simple, requiring about three minutes.

After being taken out of the pot, the stems were visibly thicker, now about the size of a toothpick.

He removed them and set them aside to cool. Then, they brought the steamer filled with dough fruits to the top of the steaming pot and started steaming.

"How long should they steam?"

"Eight minutes. Steam them for eight minutes, and they'll be ready."

While the dough fruits were steaming, Xie Baomin wasn't idle. He took the red beets he had brought, deftly peeled them, and then sliced them into fine shreds into a bowl.

As soon as he did, red juice slowly began to seep out at the bottom of the bowl.

"Senior Brother, what are you using this for? For coloring?"

"Yes, it's for coloring the dough fruits. High-end pastries prohibit artificial colors, so natural dyes must be used. This way, the colors look more beautiful."

With that filmed, everyone could finally take a break.

Zhen Wensheng brought over two cups of tea, saying, "Watching Boss Lin cook so much previously gave us the illusion that we were culinary experts too. Who knew that as soon as Chef Xie arrived today, he'd immediately put us in our place."

Lin Xu's videos tended to focus on home cooking; considering the audience's ability to follow, the methods were relatively simplified. Now, as Xie Baomin made the dough fruits, the disparity in skill was immediately highlighted.

At first, it seemed manageable, like making dumplings at home, Zhen Wensheng thought. But starting from the step of enclosing the filling, when I saw him use the area between his thumb and forefinger to meticulously wrap 20 grams of filling with a 20-gram dough wrapper, I realized this wasn't a dish I could even attempt to make.

And during this step, Geng Lishan, who had been watching with great interest, even explained Xie Baomin's filling technique to Zhen Wensheng. "This technique is called 'pinching a peach.' It involves using the area between the thumb and forefinger to gradually draw the dough wrapper upwards and tighten it, precisely shaping it into a point. It looks just like a peach."

Xie Baomin took a sip of tea and said, "I actually want to make home-cooked dishes too. However, the leadership gave the directive for the first few videos to showcase the professionalism and high-end nature of Fishing Platform. They specifically requested dough fruits, so I can only do my best."

Lin Xu and Zeng Xiaoqi couldn't help but laugh.

If we hadn't attended the meeting, we might have actually believed you!

Director Liao did indeed name someone, but he named Chef Qiu! What are you trying to pull here, stirring things up?

Lin Xu mentally shed a tear of sympathy for Qiu Zhenhua.

I wonder what his reaction will be when he finds out his senior brother hijacked his dish.

Chef Qiu, with his gold-rimmed glasses and scholarly, gentle demeanor, was like a university professor. Yet, he had the misfortune of encountering his senior brother—a veritable envoy of bandits, the personification of a thug.

What a pair of fated adversaries!

No, not just one pair... Considering Guo Weidong, Song Dahai, and the others, Senior Brother has quite a few adversaries.

Luckily, they're all male. If the other head chefs were women, Senior Brother, that philandering scumbag, would definitely be torn to shreds in lengthy online exposés.

Eight minutes passed quickly.

The filming continued.

Xie Baomin didn't directly lift the pot lid; instead, he first turned off the stove's heat to prevent the dough fruits from shrinking due to a sudden drop in temperature when the lid was lifted.

After turning off the heat and waiting a moment, he then lifted the pot lid.

A waft of steam mixed with the scent of dough drifted out from the pot.

The little "apples" on the chopsticks had swollen to twice their size, their color slightly yellowed, resembling the white apples commonly found in the market.

Chapter 649: Wow, it looks even more like an apple than a real apple! Qiuqiu, I have a sincere suggestion for you!_3

Upon close observation, one could see that the surface of the apple was shiny, slightly gleaming under the light. This was because lard had been added to the dough.

"It's so beautiful!" Zeng Xiaoqi couldn't help but exclaim.

She had originally eaten her fill of Demore stewed fish and Earth Three Fresh at noon and wasn't planning on having any dough fruit. But upon seeing these shapes, Ms. Zeng suddenly felt she could stomach a little more. Indeed, it would be quite regrettable not to eat such a cute little apple.

Seeing the shape of these little apples, Geng Lishan couldn't stay seated. "The technique is really quite exquisite, professional. It seemed like too much force was used in several places while molding, but after steaming, it all turned out to be just perfect."

He stood up and watched the little apples from a distance, his face filled with anticipation. If it weren't for the filming still going on, he really wanted to walk over and take a closer look.

Xie Baomin took the steamed dough fruits off the chopsticks one by one and placed them on baking paper. Then, he grabbed a piece of the coffee-colored dough left over from making the fruit stems and stuffed it into the blossom end. Stuffed with the dark piece, it looked more like an apple. The small holes left by the chopsticks marred the presentation, so plugging them with the dough was perfect, making the appearance more aesthetically pleasing and complete. There was no need to stuff too much dough, just a little bit was fine. He pushed it in gently with a toothpick, not too deep, otherwise, it wouldn't look like an apple.

After the dough was stuffed in, the baking paper was set on the steamer basket. These yellowish-white apples were placed on top and then steamed for two more minutes on the stove to cook the little bit of dough at the blossom end. Two minutes later, they were taken out of the pot and left to cool.

Xie Baomin poured the juice from the red beet in one bowl into another, put on disposable gloves, and then picked up a small, delicate brush to start coloring the apples. This was a very important step in making dough fruit.

Dipping the brush in the vibrant red beet juice, he gently shook it to let the excess juice drop back into the bowl. Then he gently brushed the surface of the apples with it. When brushing, it had to be done from top to bottom. He never went over the same spot twice because the right hue couldn't be achieved in one go, so there was no need to worry about uneven color.

As he worked, Xie Baomin explained the key points to Lin Xu, "You can't use a bristle brush, only a plastic brush. That's the only way to recreate that streaky feel of a Red Fuji apple. This looks more realistic than a solid red color."

It seems Senior Brother is determined to bring me into his Church. Lin Xu took careful note. If I hadn't learned it by heart using the Cooking Learning Card today, I would have tried it out at home based on these points. With so much experience in pastry, it's about time I tried creating something new.

Xie Baomin brushed them two or three times, making sure to leave a bit of space around the blossom end uncolored. Contrasted with the surrounding red, the uncolored space took on a slightly greenish tint, making it look exactly like a real apple—perhaps even more authentic than the actual fruit.

After the red beet juice was applied, the room was filled with nothing but the sound of people catching their breath. Even several cameramen were completely astounded. They hadn't anticipated the dough fruit could look so much like real apples, especially the vertical, stripe-like textures on the surface, which were indistinguishable from a real Red Fuji.

Finally, he inserted the slightly dried fruit stems into the concave top of the apples. A flawless dough fruit was thus officially completed.

"Wow, today has truly been an eye-opener."

At the beginning, Zeng Xiaoqi had purposefully put a beautiful Red Fuji apple away in the cabinet. Now, taking it out and placing it alongside Xie Baomin's dough fruit, she saw that aside from the dough fruit being a bit smaller, all other details were exactly the same. Even the patterns were indistinguishable; in fact, the ones on the dough fruit were even clearer.

Lin Xu was also stunned by their appearance. He definitely had to hide two of them to take back later. If Shen Baobao missed out on such cute dough fruit, she would probably nag him all night.

Since the dough fruits were colored while hot, the red beet juice dried quickly. Once Xie Baomin had finished coloring them all, he arranged them artfully on a plate. This excellently presented dough fruit was at last complete.

"Senior Brother, your craft is truly unmatched."

"In making dough fruit, glossy types like these are just entry-level. More high-end ones, like walnuts or kiwifruits, those really test your Kung Fu." Xie Baomin modestly waved his hand and then said to Zeng Xiaoqi, "Try it, see how it tastes."

Zeng Xiaoqi held the little apple in her hand and squeezed it. Surprisingly, it still had the softness and elasticity of proofed steamed buns. "I can't bear to eat it! I really want to find a transparent box to put it in and display it on my desk. It's practically an art piece."

Xie Baomin said while cleaning the stove, "It's just a bean bun. What's there to be reluctant about eating?"

"Then I'll taste it for the audience." Zeng Xiaoqi, facing the close-up camera, slowly broke open the small apple in her hand. Outside was a layer of soft, fluffy dough, while inside was a brown, semi-fluid filling.

Biting into it, the outer crust tasted very similar to that of a cream bun, with the lard's aroma blending harmoniously with the milky flavor of the cheese powder. As for the filling, it was rich with the taste of apple, with a slight tart sweetness, making it both delicious and astounding.

The shape of an apple, the flavor of an apple—yet, ironically, it was a snack. This was enough to make one marvel at the magic of Chinese pastries. It wasn't just pastry, but magic.

After taking a couple of bites and praising it on camera, she then wrapped up the filming.

Once the shoot was over, the surrounding crew members—like Little Wei the director, Little Sui the operator, Geng Lishan, and Zhen Wensheng—all gathered around. Everyone marveled at the small apples, feeling as if it were a dream.

Lin Xu, holding a disposable food container, had just packed two little apples when the door to the studio was pushed open, and Qiu Zhenhua, dressed casually, walked in.

Seeing the small apples everyone was holding, veins started popping on Qiu Zhenhua's forehead. As expected, I didn't guess wrong! That bastard really did make dough fruit—and apple ones, the very kind I was preparing to make! If murder weren't illegal, I would have...

"Qiuqiu, you're here?" In the midst of his rage, Xie Baomin came over, holding a small apple. "I've just finished making them. Give them a critique. Director Liao said it, didn't he? 'We chefs from Fishing Platform must stick together when we're outside and uphold the reputation of Fishing Platform. We can't do anything that would make others laugh at us.'"

Qiu Zhenhua was utterly bewildered. You bastard, are you actually lecturing me now?

The Fishing Platform's reputation did indeed need to be maintained. He glared at Xie Baomin and then looked down at the small apple in his hand. He had to admit, the apple was indeed well-made. It wasn't just a striking resemblance; it also perfectly captured the essence of the apple.

When he broke it open, the soft dough and the filling inside made Qiu Zhenhua feel as if he were tearing open a pastry he himself had made. He stared blankly for a few moments, then raised his head to look at Xie Baomin. "I remember last time I made these, you kept asking all sorts of questions. And now you've replicated it perfectly? When did you get so good at pastry, you bastard?"

An expression of helplessness appeared on Xie Baomin's face. "Well, my wife likes these cute little snacks, so I practiced a few more times..."

A few times? You son of a bitch! Not only are you showing off your talent, but you're also flaunting your relationship in my face, aren't you? Damn it! Qiu Zhenhua was suddenly overcome with envy and resentment.

After trying a piece of the dough fruit, he looked at Xie Baomin and muttered with helplessness, "You bastard, you've really shown off this time. What am I supposed to do when it's my turn? Make little apples again?"

Xie Baomin, never one to shy away from stirring up drama, said, "No, no, no, that would make people laugh at us! Your pastry skills are so high, and you have so much experience. I have a sincere suggestion: why don't you make Awakening Lion Cakes instead?"

Qiu Zhenhua was speechless. Awakening Lion Cakes? Aren't those almost ten times harder than these little apples? Great suggestion! Next time, don't bother giving me any goddamn suggestions! From now on, I wouldn't even boil water in front of you again! You thieving bastard, you learn so sneakily it's impossible to guard against! It's infuriating!

Thinking of Lin Xu's equally impressive talent for learning, Qiu Zhenhua couldn't help but sigh. "This whole damn lineage is full of monsters!"

Chapter 650: Sending a Surprise to Shen Baobao! Watching Them Eat Stir-Fried Cake Strips Looks So Delicious, Can You Make It?

"This is what Chinese pastries are supposed to look like!"

Geng Lishan held a small apple in his hand and scrutinized it repeatedly, feeling that this episode was very meaningful.

When modern people talk about Chinese pastries, they mostly think of green bean cakes, red bean cakes, peach cakes, and other common snacks. However, in reality, there are many types of Chinese pastries.

This type of realistic miniature pastry is a small offshoot of Chinese snacks.

In fact, high-end Chinese snacks are numerous, but because they were only circulated among high officials and nobles in the past and did not spread to the common people, many are unaware of them.

It has reached the point where historical dramas now use Japanese snacks, which is truly infuriating.

The old firebrand Geng Lishan couldn't help but feel emotional, thinking that "A Taste of the Human World," this culinary show, should not only promote food but also subtly incorporate food culture. Let the audience truly appreciate the charm and profoundness of Chinese culinary culture.

Zeng Xiaoqi, after eating one, wanted to continue eating but really couldn't fit more, considering the small apple was actually a steamed bun with filling, and quite substantial at that.

"Boss Lin, can we add this type of wheat fruit to our menu?"

Well, if Lin Ji's Food were to offer it, then she wouldn't eat anymore; she'd just wait and try the new offerings at the store. If it's not updated, then...maybe just one more. She had to satisfy her craving, even if it meant stuffing herself. She also shared it in the group chat, confident it would make her besties drool with envy.

The question indeed stumped Lin Xu.

He had been so busy marveling at the magic of the wheat fruit that he forgot to use the Cooking Learning Card. He hadn't learned how to make the wheat fruit.

He checked the Points Mall, which had the recipe for wheat fruit with dates, and the exchange price wasn't expensive. But he still hesitated about whether to exchange, because if these techniques couldn't be monetized, it would be quite a waste of points.

"I don't know if the customers will go for it if we add it," he said.

The biggest fear with launching a new dish is it being ignored, especially a snack like wheat fruit. At a time when fruits are available all year round, would many people choose wheat fruit? This stuff could easily cost more than ten times the price of actual fruit.

"They'll definitely go for it! Once this episode airs, I bet the whole internet will have a surge in wheat fruit popularity. If the store introduces wheat fruit then, it would be hard for it not to become a hit!"

Zeng Xiaoqi naturally hoped for a new addition.

That way, she could quietly achieve wheat fruit freedom.

Upon hearing this, Lin Xu immediately nodded and said, "Alright, I'll practice it and try introducing it in the store. I'll add it to the surprise menu items when the time comes."

The arrival of Qiu Zhenhua made the studio lively.

Lin Xu didn't continue to disturb everyone. He quietly left with a food box containing the small apples, changed back into casual clothes, and drove away from the television station.

It wasn't easy for his senior brother to find a chance to appear on screen; better not steal the limelight.

As for the wheat fruit, he could study it further later. After all, the production process was already clear, simply involving making the filling, mixing the dough, wrapping the filling, shaping, steaming, and coloring, among other steps. If he studied hard, he should be able to make it.

Turning onto West Third Ring, Lin Xu looked at the food box on the passenger seat next to him and suddenly thought of Shen Baobao, whose East Ming Building was located on West Third Ring.

Instead of waiting for this girl to get off work to taste it, why not deliver it now? Better to avoid it cooling down and the taste deteriorating.

At this time, Zeng Xiaoqi, who had resisted eating a second wheat fruit, took a few photos of the wheat fruit with her phone and immediately posted them in the "Good Sisters Bra Size Doesn't Shrink" group.

Yes, ever since Wei Qian had told Song Tiantian he wanted to lose weight, the group name had been changed to what it was now. He was already taken, so the old group name didn't fit. If Tiantian also found someone, wouldn't that make the group name utterly misleading, as if it were trying to have it both ways?

"What is this? Did you buy miniature apples?" Chen Yan replied immediately after seeing the message while browsing her phone in the office.

Ha, our Director Zeng is planning to substitute meals with fruits again, huh? Wonder how many hours she'll last this time.

Right after she sent that message, Dou Wenjing said in the group: "Why buy these small apples? Because they help control your calorie intake? @Zeng · 34B · Xiaoqi."

Zeng Xiaoqi replied with a punching emoticon: "@Dou · 32D · Wenjing, you better change your group nickname back! There's no need to bully me like this, or else I'll pull two ads from Lin Ji's Food!"

Showing off bra sizes isn't scary; it's just embarrassing for whoever is smaller.

Zeng Xiaoqi initially wanted to show off the wheat fruit, but Chen Hanhan and naughty Dou Dou had derailed the conversation.

While chatting, Shen Jiayue sent a message in the group: "Why did you all change your group nicknames, but not mine? This little apple looks so cute, Director Zeng, where did you buy it? I want to get some. I love these delicate little fruits, perfect for after meals, yum."

Shu Yun, who had just finished checking the sanitation of a private room, saw the picture and curiously sent a message: "This looks very similar to the wheat fruit from Fishing Platform's Building No. 6, @Zeng · 34B · Xiaoqi, did Chef Qiu from Fishing Platform go to the TV station to film?"

What?

This is wheat fruit?

Wheat fruit is a snack? But this little apple looks exactly like the real thing; could it be fake?

Seeing Xiao Wei about to break open a wheat fruit, Zeng Xiaoqi walked over, filmed a short video with a smug expression, and sent it to the group: "Look, it has an apple filling inside. I've already tasted it for you—super delicious, super yummy. If you want to try it, you can zoom in and lick your screens."

Hmph! You lot were subtly mocking my small chest, so I'm going to make you all drool with envy!